



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE  
*Milwaukee County*  
CHRIS ABELE • COUNTY EXECUTIVE

**For Immediate Release:**

DATE: January 25, 2017

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## **Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele Statement on Project Labor Agreements**

**MILWAUKEE** – Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele released the following statement on AB 24/SB 3 relating to project labor agreements.

“Milwaukee County is experiencing an unprecedented jobs and economic development boom as a result of the construction of more large scale projects than Milwaukee has seen in decades.

“From the Park East to the Couture, hundreds of millions of dollars in development is planned and hundreds of people are already in good-paying jobs. We’ve done all this without requiring the use of union labor through project labor agreements.

“The men and women of the building and construction trades are largely building these transformative projects. This is due in part to their culture of accountability, as well as their robust training. The trades are leaders in our economic and workforce development, investing \$30 million dollars per year of their own money in recruitment and training programs that will ensure we have enough skilled workers to power even more development and generate revenue for the state. They should be rewarded and supported for their contribution to bringing middle-class wages to our state and region.

“Wisconsin needs, more than ever, a consistent supply of skilled and trained workers. The building and construction trades do far more of this training than anyone else in the state and work hard to partner with the contractors and small businesses who employ those workers.

“While I appreciate the desire to bring about savings and efficiency for local taxpayers and governments in Wisconsin, I’m concerned that this legislation as crafted could hinder the successful training programs that the building and construction trades are providing the labor force in our

region. This could ultimately lead these same contractors and developers back to the state to ask for more investment in training programs.

“Changes that would be more directly beneficial to our taxpayers include procurement and construction delivery changes, like design-build authority and construction manager at risk, among others. These two examples are widely used in the free-market private sector but are prohibited by state law for Milwaukee County and all other local governments. These changes can be accomplished as alternatives to AB 24.

“On top of those changes, savings could also be had through a simple increase in the public works bidding threshold. Current law requires the costly and cumbersome bidding process for any project over \$25,000. Raising that to \$100,000, in line with our neighbor states, greatly increases the efficiency and savings for Milwaukee taxpayers. As you are aware, there are plenty of other mandates and issues that are more pressing to local governments than project labor agreements.

“I am open to constructive dialogue on maintaining and growing the work of workforce development our partners in the building trades are undertaking. I believe that is in the best interests of Milwaukee County and the entire state.”

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